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# CIA — washed or gutted?

The condition of the Central Intelligence Agency, which is the subject of the principle articles in the current issues of Time and Newsweek, leaves a lot of Americans with ambivalent feelings.

Any first-class intelligence agency requires overt and covert operations. All an overt operation means is that the information is available to anyone. Moscow is the capital of Russia. The Kremlin is in Moscow. Mr. Brezhnev, inside the Kremlin, makes a public pronouncement which Pravda displays in a certain way. All this is overt intelligence.

But what Mr. Brezhnev said privately to his aides that morning would require covert intelligence. An understanding of the true significance of his statement might require the piecing together of unpublished information about many other people and many distant nations. This means undercover intelligence-gathering — spying, in a word.

Covert operations can be broader. They can be used to influence events. Kings in the Middle Ages sent forth "agents provocateurs" to persuade their enemies to commit illegal acts which could trap them. Covert operators organize riots and insurrections. They can indulge in sabotage or even assassination.

That's dirty work. Americans, generally, don't like it.

In its lush, free-swinging years, when the CIA, rich with hidden appropriations, grew steadily larger, how far it went overboard with dirty work is now

a national issue. Did it arrange assassinations? Did it move too far into the murky business of influencing events in other countries?

America's enemies want to gut the CIA. Every Communist-ling outfit in this country is enlisted. The drive to convince every Third World nation that the CIA is its principal enemy is in full swing.

Time magazine quotes a Cairo operative of the KGB (Russia's counterpart of the CIA) as saying: "Of all the operations that the Soviet Union and the United States have conducted against each other, none has benefited the KGB as much as the campaign in the United States to discredit the CIA.... Today our boys have it a lot easier, and we didn't have to lift a finger. You did all our work for us."

President Carter's old Annapolis classmate, Adm. Stansfield Turner, today heads the CIA. In the process of clean-up and trim-down he has already fired 212 persons in the covert section, alone. He has agreed that no U.S. spies will be able to seek the cover of other federal agencies unless their CIA connections are made known to their agency bosses.

Nine congressional committees are privy in some measure to CIA secrets, and such committees are notoriously leaky. All of the intelligence divisions of the armed services will, henceforth, have to report to Turner.

How necessary is the CIA?

A British intelligence expert, Jack Fishman, recently said

that he was "appalled by the way the American public is falling into the trap of slandering and smearing its own security organization. The CIA may have made many mistakes, but that does not mean you should smash your own security in the name of freedom of speech. You can't destroy yourselves."

In the intelligence war the Russians are not fielding a second team. An estimated 24 percent of "diplomats" accredited to the huge Soviet embassies in Western European capitals are KGB men. Ostensible trade representatives, news correspondents, even Soviet airline personnel report to the KGB. The Russian intelligence budget is, at best estimates, \$10 billion against our \$7 billion, and, considering the Russian salary scale, Russia gets a lot more snoop for the buck.

Thus it was, perhaps, fortuitous that a nuclear-engined Russian spy satellite, went haywire last week and dumped itself in Canada. While the Russians sat tight in embarrassed silence, good intelligence enabled the United States to warn all the nations under the rogue satellite's orbit weeks ago of the impending danger.

Whether Adm. Turner knows the difference between working with a scalpel and working with a meat-ax is still not known. Reform was due. The CIA can be made more responsible.

But there is a difference between training a watchdog and shooting it between the eyes.

We never needed the dog more.